

IOWA MONTHLY WEATHER SUMMARY – MARCH 2005

General Summary. Iowa temperatures averaged 35.7° or 0.3° below normal while precipitation totaled 1.03 inches or 1.18 inches less than normal. This ranks as the 57th warmest and 33rd driest March among 133 years of state records.

Temperatures. As is typical of the spring season, temperatures were quite variable during March as there were no runs of above or below normal temperatures lasting for more than five days. March began on the cold side of normal with temperatures falling as low as 5° at Cresco on the morning of the 2nd. Just a few days later temperatures soared to 75° at Sioux City and Shenandoah on the 6th. Brief spells of cold weather brought lows down to 2° at Sibley on the 13th and 5° at Northwood on the 20th. The month ended with five consecutive warmer than normal days with temperatures reaching 82° at Sioux City on the 28th and also at Glenwood on the 29th.

Heating Degree Days. Home heating requirements, as estimated by heating degree day totals, averaged 19% greater than last March but the same as normal. So far this heating season (since July 1) degree day totals are running 5% less than last season at this time and 9% less than normal. Fortunately for Iowan's pocketbooks we have now had five consecutive milder than normal seasons (3 warmer than normal winters and 2 cooler than normal summers).

Precipitation. Monthly precipitation totals were below normal over nearly all of Iowa. The only significant precipitation event of the month was a heavy snowstorm across extreme northern Iowa on the 18th. Snowfall totals from this mid-month storm reached 16.8 inches at Northwood with amounts over 20 inches just over the border in south central and southeast Minnesota. Meanwhile, large portions of southwestern Iowa have recorded no measurable snow since February 9. Preliminary monthly precipitation totals varied from only 0.26 inches at Sioux Rapids to 2.48 inches at Northwood (including the moisture content of 18.4 inches of snow). At Guthrie Center and Onawa no measurable precipitation fell between February 24 and March 24.

Severe Weather. Large hail was reported from 9 central and south central Iowa counties on the evening of the 6th. The largest severe weather event so far this year arrived on the 30th when severe weather, mostly hail, was reported from 27 counties scattered all over Iowa. This event brought the year's first tornadoes with reports received from four north central Iowa counties.

Harry Hillaker, State Climatologist
Iowa Dept. of Agriculture & Land Stewardship
Wallace State Office Bldg., Des Moines, IA 50319
Phone: (515) 281-8981; E-mail: harry.hillaker@idals.state.ia.us